Tamarisk Removal and Riparian Restoration Project
Canyon Country Fire Zone: Moab Field Office

OVERVIEW – Most of the riparian zones within the Canyon Country Fire Zone are dominated by an invasive species from Eurasia called tamarisk (Tamarix spp.). Tamarisk has several negative effects upon our desert environment such as channelization of the river, displacing native vegetation, limits human use of waterways, increases the risk of high intensity wildfire, and displaces critical wildlife habitat.

The Canyon Country Fire Zone Fuels program is taking a leadership role in collaborative efforts between federal, state and nonprofit partners to address the tamarisk problem. While most of the work completed to date has occurred along the Colorado River Corridor of the Moab Field Office, tamarisk projects have also been initiated on multiple riparian ecosystems within the Price and Monticello Field Office boundaries.

GOALS –

- Establish and maintain fuel breaks to protect fire fighters and public safety in the event of a catastrophic wildfire.
- Establish and maintain fuel breaks to protect infrastructure and recreational sites along the Colorado River Corridor.
- Establish and maintain fuel breaks to protect and preserve existing stands of native vegetation.
- Restore and maintain native species and ecosystem health of treatment areas.

TREATMENTS - Treatment methods to remove tamarisk and restore native species varies by location and accessibility. Successful treatments include; Thin, Pile & Burn, Broadcast Burn, Mastication, Herbicide, Seeding, Tree Planting and Biological (leaf beetle). Beginning in 2004, the tamarisk leaf beetle (Diorhabda elongata) has been released locally by the Utah Division of Forestry and State Lands as a form of biological control. The Tamarisk leaf beetle feeds on tamarisk leaves by girdling them which results in a "brown out" of the tamarisk tree. It takes multiple years of infestation before a tamarisk may die. One impact of the "brown-out" condition is that for a period of time, often during the height of fire season, hundreds of miles of tamarisk vegetation becomes very susceptible to a fire start and represents an extreme fire hazard. During these periods, the Moab Field Office has had to implement fire restrictions to combat the increased hazard which has impacted recreational use of the river.

COLLABORATION- The Tamarisk Removal and Riparian Restoration Project collaboration includes; Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative (UWRI), Southeast Utah Tamarisk Partnership, Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative, The Nature Conservancy, Rim to Rim Restoration, BLM Healthy Lands Initiative, Plateau Restoration, Dolores River Restoration Partnership and Canyon Country Youth Corps.

ACHIEVMENTS - 546 Acres treated- 30 Fuel Breaks created- 6 Camp Grounds treated.

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